

## Adult civic involvement

*Education plays a vital role in preparing individuals to participate actively in the political, economic, and social aspects of their communities. For instance, more education may increase a person's sense of responsibility to be informed of national and state issues, to participate in community service activities, or to be a member of organizations. The extent to which adults with varying levels of education participate in civic activities may be an indication of the relationship between educational attainment and exercising civic responsibility.*

- In 1996, 74 percent of all adults reported voting in a national or state election in the past 5 years, while 59 percent reported being a member of an organization and 39 percent reported participating in ongoing community service.
- There was a positive relationship between the educational attainment of adults and their participation in civic activities: as adults' educational attainment increased, so did their rate of participation in civic activities such as being a member of an organization (for example, a community or church group) and participating in ongoing community service.
- In 1996, white adults were more likely than black adults to have voted in a national or state election in the past 5 years. However, blacks were just as likely as whites to be members of an organization and to participate in an ongoing community service activity.
- In 1996, parents with children age 18 or younger were more likely to report having attended a public meeting in the past 12 months and participating in ongoing community service activities than adults who did not have children age 18 or younger.
- Adults with less than a high school diploma were more likely than adults with a high school diploma, GED, or higher to report that they hardly ever read a newspaper. However, similar percentages of adults at all education levels reported that they watched national news on television at least once a week (see supplemental table 35-1).

### Percentage of adults who reported participating in civic activities, by type of activity and selected characteristics: 1996

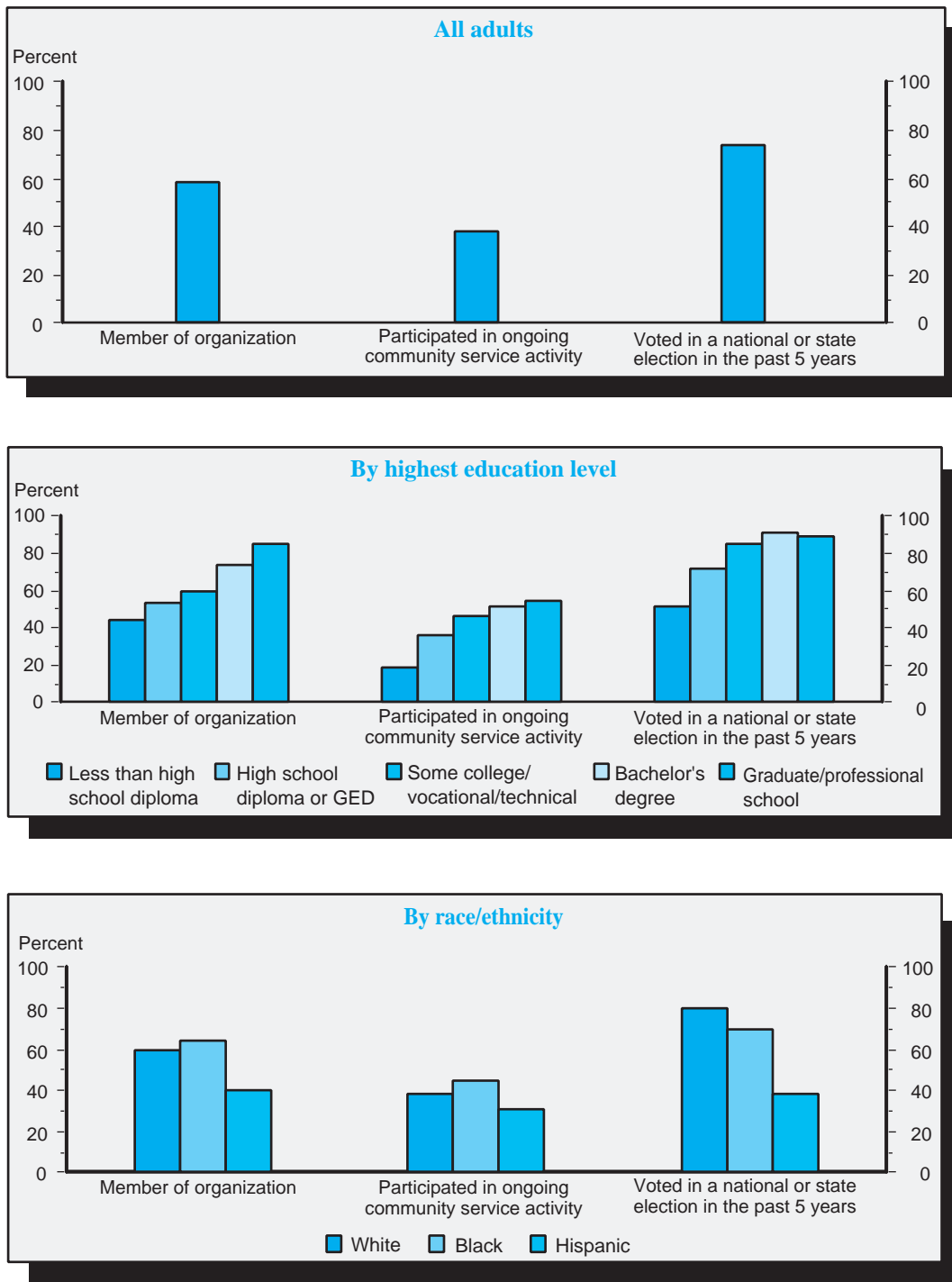
Selected characteristics	Member of organization (community group, church, etc.)	Participated in ongoing community service activity	Voted in a national or state election in the past 5 years	Performed activity in the previous 12 months		
				Contributed money to a candidate, political party, or political cause	Worked for pay/volunteered for a candidate, political party, or political cause	Attended public meeting
<b>Total</b>	<b>58.7</b>	<b>38.7</b>	<b>74.4</b>	<b>14.8</b>	<b>5.6</b>	<b>28.3</b>
Highest education level						
Less than high school diploma	44.8	19.2	51.3	6.8	3.3	12.7
High school diploma or GED	53.7	36.7	71.7	12.3	4.4	26.2
Some college/vocational/technical	59.5	46.3	84.9	16.3	5.0	34.5
Bachelor's degree	74.2	51.2	91.3	23.1	10.0	38.4
Graduate/professional school	85.3	54.2	89.7	28.4	9.8	43.7
Race/ethnicity <sup>1</sup>						
White	59.9	38.5	79.9	15.2	5.3	28.4
Black	64.7	45.2	70.1	17.4	8.6	29.7
Hispanic	40.3	31.0	38.3	10.7	2.8	20.0
Parent with child age 18 or younger <sup>2</sup>						
Yes	57.3	48.2	71.0	14.2	5.1	31.2
No	59.5	32.9	76.5	15.2	5.8	26.5

<sup>1</sup> Included in the totals but not shown separately are adults from other racial/ethnic groups.

<sup>2</sup> Includes stepparents and guardians.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Household Education Survey (NHES), 1996 (Adult Civic Involvement component).

**Percentage of adults who reported participating in civic activities,  
by type of activity: 1996**



SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Household Education Survey (NHES), 1996 (Adult Civic Involvement component).

**Table 35-1 Percentage of adults who reported obtaining various sources of news and participating in reading activities, by frequency and selected characteristics: 1996**

Selected characteristics	Read a newspaper			Read about national news in newspaper or news magazine <sup>1</sup>			Watched national news on television or listened to news on radio			Read a book
	Hardly ever	At least once a		Hardly ever	At least once a		Hardly ever	At least once a		In past 6 months
		month	week		month	week		month	week	
<b>Total</b>	<b>11.0</b>	<b>3.6</b>	<b>85.4</b>	<b>32.4</b>	<b>11.5</b>	<b>56.1</b>	<b>5.5</b>	<b>3.1</b>	<b>91.5</b>	<b>65.5</b>
Highest education level										
Less than high school diploma	22.4	6.8	70.8	53.0	9.1	37.8	8.8	1.7	89.6	41.8
High school diploma or GED	10.3	3.8	85.9	34.7	12.2	53.1	5.8	4.0	90.2	62.9
Some college/vocational/technical	9.1	0.9	90.0	29.7	13.7	56.6	2.5	3.4	94.1	72.9
Bachelor's degree	7.7	2.1	90.2	20.7	10.2	69.1	4.0	1.7	94.4	78.8
Graduate/professional school	6.1	2.0	91.9	8.9	10.7	80.5	3.2	0.9	95.9	89.9
Race/ethnicity <sup>2</sup>										
White	9.4	3.0	87.7	31.1	10.7	58.2	5.7	3.1	91.3	67.9
Black	11.3	3.6	85.1	38.4	14.0	47.7	3.4	2.5	94.1	63.0
Hispanic	23.8	8.7	67.5	40.1	12.4	47.5	7.1	3.1	89.8	50.4
Sex										
Male	9.0	3.9	87.1	26.9	11.2	62.0	4.8	3.1	92.1	59.4
Female	12.8	3.3	83.9	37.5	11.8	50.8	6.1	3.0	90.9	71.1
Household Income										
\$10,000 or less	23.5	6.5	70.0	47.9	11.6	40.5	7.5	2.0	90.6	53.9
10,001–20,000	10.2	3.6	86.2	37.4	12.3	50.3	5.6	4.2	90.3	55.6
20,001–35,000	13.9	4.9	81.2	39.0	9.1	51.9	5.8	3.6	90.7	63.1
35,001–50,000	6.6	2.9	90.5	27.2	12.7	60.1	6.4	4.1	89.5	70.3
50,001 or more	6.1	1.7	92.3	20.2	12.0	67.8	3.5	1.8	94.7	75.6
Parent with child age 18 or younger <sup>3</sup>										
Yes	10.8	4.7	84.5	33.6	13.3	53.1	5.6	3.6	90.9	66.4
No	11.1	2.9	86.0	31.7	10.4	58.0	5.4	2.7	91.9	65.5

<sup>1</sup> The variable "Read about national news in a newspaper or news magazine" is a separate variable from "Read a newspaper" and focuses on the subject matter read by respondents (e.g., national news) rather than the type of reading material (e.g., newspaper versus news magazine).

<sup>2</sup> Included in the totals but not shown separately are adults from other racial/ethnic groups.

<sup>3</sup> Includes stepparents and guardians.

NOTE: Details may not add to 100.0 due to rounding.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Household Education Survey (NHES), 1996 (Adult Civic Involvement component).

### Note to Indicator 35: Civic involvement

The following are sample questions that were used in the National Household Education Survey (NHES) 1996 to examine adult participation in activities that promote civic involvement.

- Are you a member of any organization, like a community group, church or synagogue, union, or professional organization?
- Do you participate in any ongoing community service activity, for example, volunteering at a school, coaching a sports team, or working with a church or neighborhood association?
- Which of the following activities, if any, have you done in the past 12 months:
  - a. Contributed money to a candidate, a political party, or some political cause?
  - b. Worked either for pay or as a volunteer for a candidate, a political party, or some political cause?
  - c. Attended a public meeting, for example, a town meeting, a political rally, or a meeting of a neighborhood organization?

# Standard Error Tables

**Table S35**      **Standard errors for the text table in *Indicator 35***

Selected characteristics	Member of organization (community group, church, etc.)	Participated in ongoing community service activity	Voted in a national or state election in the past 5 years	Performed activity in the previous 12 months		Attended public meeting
				Contributed money to a candidate, political party, or political cause	Worked for pay/ volunteered for a candidate, political party, or political cause	
<b>Total</b>	<b>1.3</b>	<b>1.2</b>	<b>0.9</b>	<b>0.8</b>	<b>0.5</b>	<b>1.1</b>
Highest education level						
Less than high school diploma	4.4	2.7	3.8	2.0	1.1	2.9
High school diploma or GED	1.6	1.7	1.4	1.0	0.6	1.5
Some college/vocational/technical	4.8	5.2	3.0	4.1	1.6	5.0
Bachelor's degree	2.5	3.1	1.6	2.4	1.9	2.8
Graduate/professional school	2.6	4.4	2.5	3.4	2.2	3.8
Race/ethnicity						
White	1.5	1.5	1.2	0.9	0.6	1.3
Black	3.5	3.8	3.6	2.8	2.1	3.4
Hispanic	3.8	3.7	3.4	2.6	1.1	3.7
Parent with child age 18 or younger						
Yes	1.9	2.3	1.8	1.3	0.9	1.8
No	1.7	1.7	1.1	1.1	0.6	1.4

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Household Education Survey (NHES), 1996 (Adult Civic Involvement component).